



DANCE

SCHOOL



2026-2027 | RULES & REGULATIONS



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All updates and changes for the 2026-2027 season will be denoted in **red text**.

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Information is subject to change

Visit usa.varsity.com for the most up-to-date competition and camp information this season!

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Ready to Compete?

The USA is proud to offer multiple events for high school teams this season. See the Various Competition Types Below!

Regionals – No prior qualification is required to compete at this one-day event. Regionals are local qualifying competitions for USA Dance Nationals, as well as stand-alone events for those who wish to compete but have no goal to attend the USA Dance Nationals event. All performers receive a participation ribbon (or other commemorative item). Regional awards are presented to top teams in each division as well as select specialty awards.

Classics – No prior qualification is required to compete at this one-day event. Classics are qualifying competitions for USA Dance Nationals, as well as stand-alone events for those who wish to compete, but have no goal to attend the USA Dance Nationals event. All performers receive a commemorative participation gift. Classic awards are presented to 50% of the teams in each division. For all divisions, an exclusive “Champion” item is presented to each first place competitor. Top awards for Choreography, Execution and Showmanship will be presented as well as select specialty awards.

USA Dance Nationals – USA Dance Nationals began in 1986. Prior qualification is required. The event takes place in Anaheim, CA and draws teams from throughout the western United States and beyond. Specialty Awards include Judges Award of Excellence, Best Choreography, Sweepstakes Style Awards, Sportsmanship and Grand Champion. Perform in the Anaheim Convention Center – steps from Disneyland Resort™ in sunny Southern California. Win scholarships, Championship Backpacks, Banners, Medallions & More!

SAVE THE DATE!



***February 18 - 20, 2027
Anaheim Convention Center
Anaheim, CA***

Dance Nationals Qualification Requirements

All Divisions: 75% of the team competing at USA Dance Nationals will be required complete the Varsity Spirit/NFHS Squad Credentialing Program. More information about this can be found [here](#) or by contacting your Varsity Spirit State Director.

Prior qualification through a USA Regional competition or other sanctioned event/process is required in order to attend USA Dance Nationals in any division (excluding solos and Jr. High teams). If you do not have a USA Dance Regional or Classic in your area, you must attend a virtual regional. Register early! **Teams do not need to wait to qualify for Nationals before registering.**

Bids to Nationals are awarded to teams receiving 80% of total possible points for all Championship divisions and 75% of total possible points for all other team divisions, regardless of any penalties received.

Dance Nationals Tentative Schedule of Events

Thursday, February 18th – Solo Champion Prelims/Semi-Finals & Senior, Junior, Sophomore/Freshman Solo Divisions – Prelims/Finals

Friday, February 19th – Team Division Prelims

Saturday, February 20th – Team Division Finals & Solo Champion Finals

Visit usa.varsity.com for more information or contact
USACompetitions@varsity.com

CODE OF CONDUCT

Varsity Spirit encourages and supports sportsmanship, integrity and fairness among participants and coaches/owners/directors in all facets of team practice and performance. We strive to uphold the highest standards and promote this to the best of our abilities and believe that coaches are instrumental in promoting and instilling this among their respective team members.

To ensure the most positive experience for all attendees, Varsity Spirit asks that all participants, coaches, gym owners, directors and spectators adhere to and know the Code of Conduct and Prohibited Items for all Regional, Virtual, and Championships events.

To review the entire policy please click here: [Varsity Spirit - Safety](#)

EVENT ELIGIBILITY

Varsity Spirit will require that all coaches, directors, choreographers, and personnel wishing to access the warm up area, backstage, coaches' box, or athlete areas at our competitions have required credentialing, background check, and safeguarding as required by each event.

To review the entire eligibility policy please click here: [Varsity Spirit - Event Eligibility](#)

EVENT GUIDELINES

The coach/director of each team is responsible for understanding and following the Event Guidelines. Event Guidelines include:

- General Guidelines
- Safety Guidelines
- Music Guidelines
- Interruption of Performance
- Competition Area
- Warm Up Room Policy

To review additional information, click here: [Varsity Spirit - Event Guidelines](#)

EVENT POLICIES

All attendees are expected to follow event policies to ensure a respectable and secure environment.

To review the event policies, click here: [Varsity Spirit - Event Policies](#)

USA SCHOOL DANCE DIVISIONS

To review the 2026-2027 USA Dance Divisions please visit [Division, Rules & Scoring - USA](#) for Dance Divisions.

DIVISION GUIDELINES

To be considered for the Nationals Grand Champion Title at the 2026 USA Dance Nationals event your team must compete at least one routine in one of the following categories Dance/Pom, Kick, Prop, Musical Theater and/or Hip Hop divisions.

Divisions specific to JV teams are: JV Dance, JV Hip Hop, JV Dance/Pom, JV Jazz. In categories not specific to JV teams (i.e: Kick, Novelty, etc.), JV teams can compete in Varsity categories as a JV team. JV teams are not permitted to compete in Varsity categories (Sm/Med/Large: Dance, Hip Hop, Dance/Pom or Jazz) already offered as separate JV divisions. A team can only compete in a JV division if their school has a separate JV and Varsity team. An individual may not crossover as a member of both the Varsity team and JV team under any category. JV and Varsity teams may not combine under any category. If a school has separate JV and Varsity teams, these teams must always compete separately, with no dancer (including alternates) crossing over between JV and Varsity.

At Regionals/Classics a high school can compete 7 routines per team and 3 solos per school unless otherwise noted.

At Nationals a high school can compete 7 routines per team and 5 soloists. There will be 4 solo divisions. Schools can enter 1 Solo Champion, 1 Senior dancer, 1 Junior dancer and up to 1 Sophomore and 1 Freshman dancer in the Sophomore/Freshman division.

SOLO COMPETITION GUIDELINES

To review the 2026-2027 USA Dance Solo Competition Guidelines please visit [Division, Rules & Scoring - USA](#) for Dance Divisions.

ELIGIBILITY POLICY - HIGH SCHOOL

At the time of competition, entrants must be registered students in the school they are representing and official full-time members of their team. No members shall be younger than 9th grade or older than 12th grade. The penalty for an eligibility violation will be disqualification of the routine.

ELIGIBILITY POLICY - JR HIGH

At the time of competition, entrants must be registered students in the school they are representing and official full-time members of their team. No members shall be older than 9th grade. The penalty for an eligibility violation will be disqualification of the routine.

RECREATIONAL GUIDELINES

1. Athlete eligibility will be based on the birth year, or partial year listed to be eligible for that division. All recreational divisions can be found on the USA Division Sheet linked here.
 - a. [Division, Rules & Scoring - USA](#) under Dance Divisions.
2. Teams must submit a Varsity Recreational Roster Verification Form at each event. This form can be found online under Required Forms.
3. Recreational Teams will require all coaches to have a USA Cheer Membership. At least one coach must have the USA Cheer Coach membership that includes the USA Cheer Youth Safety Risk Management certification course and must accompany the team at every competition. Proof of certification is required upon registration for every event.
4. Recreational teams will follow all USA Routine Safety Rules as linked here.
 - a. [Division, Rules & Scoring - USA](#) under Dance Division Limitations, Safety Rules & Legality Guidelines.
5. For the 2026-2027 event season, Recreational divisions will be offered at regionals only and not eligible to compete at USA Dance Nationals or USA Spirit Nationals.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Rules are designed to help dancers avoid injury, while allowing for many skills that can be executed safely with proper training and coaching.
2. We want to ensure a penalty free experience for your team.
 - a. For any specific skill and safety questions that pertain to the 2026-2027 Division Limitations or 2026-2027 Safety Rules should be submitted using the following form: USA Song/Pom Legality Inquiry Form
3. A team must compete in the same category/division at Nationals for which it qualified in at a Regional/Classic unless prior written approval is received from the USA.
 - a. Example: If you qualify for Hip Hop Championship at a Regional/Classic, you may not compete in Hip Hop Intermediate at Nationals, unless you also qualify for that category at a Regional/Classic.
 - b. The above is an example – other examples of this also exist.
4. If a team qualifies for Nationals two or more times (80% of total possible points, regardless of any penalties received) in the Championship level at a Regional/Classic competition, then they must compete in the Championship level at Nationals.
5. **Clarification: Teams are only allowed to compete in one division level at any one event in any given division.**
 - a. **Example: You may not compete in both the Medium Hip Hop Intermediate and Medium Hip Hop Championship divisions at the same event.**
 - b. The above is an example – other examples of this also exist.

CHOREOGRAPHY AND COSTUMING

APPROPRIATENESS

1. All routine choreography, movements, and costuming should be appropriate and entertaining for a family friendly environment and for audience members of all ages.
2. Any movement(s) implying something indecent, offensive, or sexual in content are not allowed.
3. Music cannot contain inappropriate words, phrases, and/or sounds, in any language; this includes direct and/or specific references to the act of consuming alcohol (ex: “sipping champagne”), pejorative words, illegal activities for minors (ex: “smoking cigarettes”), acts of violence or inciting violence against others, sexual references, or offensive language referencing any groups. Inappropriate examples provided above are included to help illustrate potential violations. Violations are not limited to those specific examples.
4. It is the coach’s responsibility to screen all music to ensure that it is appropriate for the students, audience, and community.
5. Explicitly inappropriate music/lyrics, costuming and/or movements will incur a deduction.

COSTUMING

1. Shoes are not required when performing, but participants that wear shoes must have soft, non-marking soles. Penalty of marking floor results in disqualification. The performing school will be responsible for any charges that may occur as a result of damage to any floor. Performers who do not wear shoes while performing do so at their own risk. Shoes are required at all other times when not directly performing.
2. Costuming must be well secured and appropriate for a family friendly environment.
3. Jewelry and accessories are allowed, provided they are secured appropriately to the dancer.

PROPS

1. Handheld and wearable props (individually used and carried by dancers i.e. ball, poms or scarf) are permitted in **ALL** divisions.
 - a. A handheld prop that can bear the full weight of one or more dancers is not permitted.
2. Sets and backdrops are **ONLY** permitted in the Prop and Musical Theater Divisions. Sets and backdrops may not be used in Dance, Contemporary, Lyrical, Hip Hop, Kick, Dance/Drill, Co-Ed, Military, Solo, Dance/Pom, and All Male.
3. All props must be non-marking. Padding and/or rubber wheels must be used. Penalty is disqualification. The performing school will be responsible for any charges that may occur as a result of damage to the floor.
4. Any props/sets/accessories must be able to fit through a standard door measuring 7 feet high x 63 inches wide. Once your entrance and/or exit time begins, teams may

start to assemble props/sets to any size they wish but they must be able to assemble all props/sets within the entrance and exit time allotted. Props may be assembled prior to entrance time and before entering the gym only if they meet the 7 feet high x 63 inches wide requirement after assembly. Otherwise, teams cannot assemble props/sets/backdrops until they are called on to the performance floor and their entrance time begins.

5. All teams must enter and exit the gym with ALL props/sets at the time of performance. Storing of props/sets in the venue (before performance or after) will not be permitted, unless otherwise noted in competition information. Penalty is 10 points per prop infraction.
6. If a prop/set/accessory stands higher than 4 feet from the performance floor, a dancer can only jump, tumble, or fall from the prop/set/accessory at the point of 4 feet or below.
7. USA Competition Directors reserve the right to measure assembled props.

ENTRANCES AND EXITS

1. **Timing:** Begins once the team has been announced to the floor or the first sign of movement from the team to enter the performance floor, whichever is first.
2. **ALL Dance, Contemporary, Military, Hip Hop, Jazz, Lyrical, Kick, Dance/Drill, Co-Ed Dance, All-Male and Dance/Pom divisions:** Entrance and exit up to 30 seconds each.
3. **Prop & Musical Theater:** Entrance and exit up to 1 ½ minutes each.

TIME LIMITATIONS

1. **Timing:** Begins with the first note of music or movement, whichever is first. Timing will end with the last note of music or movement, whichever is last.
2. **ALL Dance, Contemporary, Military, Hip Hop, Jazz, Lyrical, Kick, Dance/Drill, Co-Ed Dance, All-Male and Dance/Pom divisions:** Up to 3 minutes (maximum) per routine.
3. **Prop & Musical Theater:** Up to 3 minutes (maximum) per routine.

USA DANCE SAFETY RULES

To review the 2026-2027 USA Dance Safety Rules please visit [Division, Rules & Scoring - USA](#) under Dance Division Limitations, Safety Rules & Legality Guidelines.

USA DANCE DIVISION LIMITATIONS

To review the 2026-2027 USA Dance Division Limitations please visit [Division, Rules & Scoring - USA](#) under Dance Division Limitations, Safety Rules & Legality Guidelines.

LEGALITY REVIEW (PRE-EVENT)

Routines at all USA competitions must follow the **2026-2027 USA Dance Safety Rules, the 2026-2027 USA Dance Division Limitations and the 2026-2027 Dance Solo Competition Guidelines.**

Submitting a video is the only way to review a routine for potential safety violations. For all legality, division limitations, or questions regarding specific performance elements, you may submit a video that contains the skill in question. **Videos can be submitted here:** [USA Dance Legality Inquiry Form](#)

All video inquiries for safety rule legalities, for one-day events, must be submitted 14 days or more prior to the competition date. Note that submission of a routine and/or its elements does not preclude a team from being assessed a penalty while at a specific USA competition, as performances from the video submission may differ from those executed on the competition floor during a live event. Submission of a routine does not guarantee that it can be reviewed.

Further questions can be submitted to USADanceRules@varsity.com.

DIVISION DESCRIPTIONS

Please note: the only divisions which have male/female restrictions are Co-Ed Dance & All-Male Dance (see below).

Scoresheets are available at [Division, Rules & Scoring - USA](#)

The competition director may cancel, combine, or divide divisions as deemed necessary. If divisions are sub-divided, adjustments will be made to the number of available awards. Multiple teams from a school will be allowed (i.e., Drill Team vs. Dance Team or JV vs. Varsity) as long as individuals are not competing on both teams. For example, if the same dancer competes on both the Dance Team and the Drill Team for their high school, those teams will then need to share the **seven (7)** maximum number of routines. An individual may not compete against her/himself in the same division/category (i.e., perform in two X-Small Dance routines).

Individual Solo Competition

All contestants must perform a solo dance routine up to 2 minutes (maximum) in length: entrance up to 15 seconds and exit up to 15 seconds. Any dance style or combination of styles may be used. **A soloist from any team may compete only one solo per USA event.**

Dance

The overall effect must be dance in nature. Any dance style or combination of styles are acceptable. Dance attire or school uniforms may be used.

Contemporary

A routine with movement emphasizing use of space, body awareness, a variety of movement qualities, gestural motions & potential motifs (ex. suspension, off center movement, momentum & gravity). It tends to express movement through the entire body and does not follow strict ballet or jazz forms.

Dance Showcase

This division is the perfect opportunity for any performing arts program or team to gain valuable performance experience for evaluation only. Performances in this division will be evaluated against the USA scoresheet for an overall rating based on scoring. **This division is for evaluation only.** Any dance style or combination of styles are acceptable. This division is currently offered at USA Regional and Classic events only.

Co-Ed Dance

This team must consist of at least 2 males and 2 females. Routine may be of any dance style or combination of styles. Routine emphasis must be on partnering interactions for at least 50% of the routine.

All-Male Dance

This team must consist of all males. Routine may be of any dance style or combination of styles.

Lyrical

A routine where all dancers interpret the lyrics, mood or intent of a song (with or without words), using ballet and/or jazz and/or modern technique. This form has a quality of movement that uses the music and/or lyrics as the guide. Incorporating balance / sustained movement, as well as facial and body emotion, is expected.

Dance/Pom

Routine emphasis must be on the use of pom. Routine should incorporate visual routine staging and complexity of pom movement. Teams must use two poms for at least three-fourths of the routine. Standard school uniforms, dance or military clothing may be worn.

Hip Hop

A routine where dancers perform a variety of street style movements that showcase the artistry and technique of hip hop, or that have evolved as part of hip-hop culture. Difficulty should be emphasized through body awareness/muscle control, textures, dynamic and diversity in the various hip hop styles. (Ex: Vogue, Locking, Breaking, Popping, Whacking, House). Any genre of music may be used as long as the routine as a whole focuses on hip hop style.

Military

Routine must be military in nature with an emphasis on precision & sharpness through the dancer's entire body. Routine must include military maneuvers, pattern formations, visual effects, various arm/hand sequences and a variety of marching styles (i.e. glide, high knee, prance, pony, chug, etc.). School uniforms or military attire/costume must be worn. In keeping with the military tradition, all maneuvering/marching/traveling must begin on the left foot. All difficulty and technical elements must be in keeping with military style/quality.

Dance/Drill

Routine must incorporate a combination of the Military division and Dance division guidelines. (Please read the descriptions of both the Military & Dance divisions before competing in the Dance/Drill division). This routine must incorporate 1/2 dance and 1/2 military movements. (i.e. dance style must not be emphasized over military style and vice versa.)

Kick

Routine emphasis must be on kicks. Kicks must be the focal point of the routine and must be used for more than 3/4 of the total routine length. Any style of movement may be used, as long as the kicks are the focal point of the routine. Routine must include a variety of kick sequences, as well as a variety of different kick types overall.

Jazz

Routine is rooted within the broad spectrum of jazz dance, utilizing vocabulary from any style of jazz dance technique, including theatrical, vernacular, technical, stylized, classical/concert, pop, etc. Choreography should include the aesthetic foundation of jazz dance, emphasizing bold dramatic body movements, isolations, contractions, rhythm, musicality, energy/expression and dynamics.

Prop

Routine emphasis must be on the creative and visual use of a prop or props. Any style of dance may be used. However, the manipulation of the prop must be the focal point of the presentation, rather than the focus being on the movement of the dancer. The prop must be used in at least 3/4 of the routine. Routine and/or uniform may be thematic in nature but must not be the focal point of the routine. Standard school uniforms or costumes may be worn.

Musical Theater

Routine emphasis must be of a unique thematic nature. The entire routine must emphasize a story line, character or present a musical theater concept which does not rely on any prior knowledge (on part of the audience/judges) of the theme's origin. Routine may include technical dance movements, permitting these movements that make sense within the theme, character and/or story line. Props are permitted but should not be the focal point of the routine. Props should only serve to enhance the story/character/theme. Themed costumes should be worn. Sets and backdrops are permitted but not required.